



November 21, 2013

Fresno Council of Governments
2035 Tulare Street, Suite 201
Fresno, CA 93721

RE: Fresno Council of Governments – Sustainable Communities Strategy Development

Dear Board Members of the Fresno Council of Governments:

The Council of Infill Builders is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation of real estate professionals committed to improving California through infill development. The organization seeks to educate the public about the benefits of infill for revitalizing neighborhoods, providing transportation choices, creating viable close-knit mixed-use communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, aligning jobs with housing and improving the overall economy.

On behalf of the organization, I thank you for the significant efforts that you have put into creating the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan and the Fresno region's first Sustainable Communities Strategy. We believe that aligning transportation investments with the regional growth pattern can accelerate infill development. Your hard work to implement SB 375 can revitalize Fresno's neighborhoods and provide more diverse housing options for residents.

On October 23rd, we organized "Revitalizing Valley Cities," a convening at Fresno State of real estate developers, finance leaders, and other economic stakeholders to discuss the future of infill development in the Fresno region and how local and statewide partners can work together to overcome the challenges experienced by infill builders. The convening highlighted the challenges that infill builders face in financing downtown-oriented projects, given the historic lack of investment in these core areas and the corresponding regulatory and process hurdles that "catalyst" pioneer projects experience.

The convening clarified that with strong public partnerships and support for infrastructure investments in downtown areas and existing neighborhoods, infill can meet housing demand from currently unserved market segments, such as students, young professionals, empty nesters, and couples without children. As the 2012 Concord Group study that you commissioned reported, "The [Valley] region has historically under-delivered higher density housing, particularly for renter households."

As you select a preferred scenario and finalize your Regional Transportation Plan, we encourage you to select a scenario that supports infill-oriented infrastructure over the coming decades in order to realize its many economic benefits for cities and towns in Fresno County. These investments can catalyze significant private investment and revitalize downtowns, commercial strips, and main streets. Specifically, we encourage you to:

- Ensure that all flexible regional funds first go to improving and maintaining transportation infrastructure within existing neighborhoods, including for pedestrians, transit, and bicyclists;
- Create a plan to address critical infrastructure gaps throughout the region in order to allow infill developers to succeed in a variety of places and offer products for multiple income levels; and
- Develop flexible grant funding, modeled on the One Bay Area Grant program, that competitively funds local governments to revitalize neighborhoods and to plan and build transportation projects that encourage biking, walking, and transit usage.

Infill cannot succeed without good underlying plans and the transit and streetscape infrastructure needed to catalyze projects. Following the loss of redevelopment funds, cities and towns around the state need supportive investment for their core neighborhoods. Your leadership can therefore help fill the void and ensure that the Valley fulfills its promise of creating livable, convenient, and economically viable communities for all its residents – both current and future.

We look forward to working with you and local stakeholders to identify successful strategies to achieve this vision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Curt Johansen", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Curt Johansen
Chairman, Council of Infill Builders